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A Mirage - a Trois  
across the sky

Edmund Young.





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# A MÉNAGE À TROIS ACROSS THE STYX

219  
1784

AND OTHER  
ADVENTURES IN VERSE

by

LT. COL. SIR FRANK POPHAM YOUNG

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SAN FRANCISCO

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TO THE LADY  
WHO HAS PLACED HER HAND IN MINE  
COME WEAL OR WOE  
THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS DEDICATE  
*F. P. Y.*



## “KISMET”

 HAT which is built by mortal hands  
Time lays to waste,  
But 'tis not so with those mysterious  
commands,  
Which on man's forehead traced,  
Link life with life by interwoven strands  
Of Destiny. These cannot be effaced.

“IN THE MIST”

LOVE has thundered, Venus beckoned,  
Thor and Odin held their sway;  
*(See the light upon the mountain  
And the ripple on the sea!)*  
Brahma counselled, Shiva threatened;  
Christ has died.  
*(Hear the rustle on the mountain  
And the murmur of the sea!)*

Sternly preached Mahommed;  
Gently smiling, practised Buddha. Yet alway  
Human steps have wandered,  
Human hearts have cried  
“What is Truth? But lift the curtain,  
Making Love more pure, and Faith more certain.”  
*(The light has died upon the mountain—  
Mists enshroud the sea).*



## CALIFORNIA OR CATHAY

I RESTED in the Shalimar where, tier on tier,  
The jewelled garden nestles 'neath th' eternal  
hills,  
And broods above the sleeping surface of the  
lake.

The great "chenar" trees whispered "It was here  
Jehangir held his court," and all the little rills  
Told of a storied Past. I pondered only half awake;

Pictured the smooth and scheming courtiers, silken  
clad,

When Islam with a fierce, intense, and vivid sweep  
Led, dominated, ruled, and then declined.

By sloth and luxury beguiled, and power-mad,  
Akbar's great Empire-fortress tottered till its keep,  
Sapped by fanatic hate, was slowly undermined.

And then the jangled music of soft camel bells  
Announced a "Kafila" beyond the carved gate.  
Austere and supercilious, gaunt, reluctant, slow,  
From Samarkand, Bokhara—weaving magic spells—  
These central Asian genii discharged their freight,  
Into the living present, stark Romance of long ago.

I watched the bearded, hawk-nosed trader from afar,  
Engirt with pistols, hung about with keen edged  
knives,

And judged his treasure to be something worth,  
Perchance

He carried priceless jewels—some great, shining star  
Of Asia! Or perchance this care betokened wives  
Suspect of light and loose—and dangerous—dalliance.

NOTE: Kafila—a train of camels.

He made ablutions. Then with fervent, supple grace  
Salaamed to Allah, faced the setting sun in prayer.  
A half raised "burka," which had draped the form  
Of one who, patient, sat behind, revealed a face  
Which well might turn an Emperor from the fretting  
care  
Of march and countermarch, of combat, siege, and  
storm.

Long curving lashes swept the olive tinted cheek  
Stained with a tea-rose flush. Then slowly  
dropped the veil.  
The little figure softly lit upon the ground,  
To outward seeming humble, acquiescent, meek,  
Followed the age old path of servitude behind the  
male,  
Rebel at heart—her eyes had told it—gagged and  
bound.

Long years have passed, and more than half the  
circled world  
Divides me from that terraced garden of delight.  
Softened by night the rough Pacific hills enfold.  
On the calm bosom of the bay the sails are furled.  
The water splashes and low voices of the night  
Bring back to me that scene, the tale that half was  
told.

The wizardry of art has wrought with loving skill,  
Has caught the spirit of the Orient; and here  
Curved arches, cunning lines of building, terraced  
slopes,  
The sense of quiet water, and the brooding hill,  
The richly perfumed air—all waft me to Kashmir,  
And tell a thousand tales of bygone fears and hopes.

Once more I see that stealing glance with eyes abrim,  
The little henna-tinted feet, the blush, the blanch  
    of fear,  
As gleaming in the folds of his silk "kamarband"  
Sharp steel forbade all speech with any man but him,  
(Owner of lips unsmiling, Lord of a tremulous tear)  
Who brought his wares to India from distant  
    Samarkand.

Written in the garden of the Samarkand Hotel,  
Santa Barbara, Calif., February 28, 1921.

# VOX FEMINAE VOX DEI

INSCRIBED TO ———.

CARELESSLY I trod and recked not that  
my feet  
Oft injured little peeping things of life.  
The frond unfolding, and the shyly sweet  
Florescence of green leaf and yellow bud.  
Born in a world of strife,  
Small things essayed their wings,  
Or crept, across my path.  
Those little animate things  
I crushed unheeding. Careless hands destroyed them.  
Careless footsteps spilled their innocent blood.  
The righteous wrath  
Of God made me more blind.  
The timid questionings of some untutored mind,  
The gropings of a human soul,  
The silent plea for sympathy—all these sacred claims  
I passed unheeding. Like the sightless mole  
I burrowed, thinking all the while that selfish aims  
Carried me upwards. I had hurt and bruised  
Frail things and tender, newly born.  
For worse than open scorn  
Is chill indifference. I had thus abused  
The trust imposed in me, but gaily went  
Along the open road, blind to the narrow trails  
Which lead through brambles to the dazzling height.  
I had been sent  
To do God's work. The man who fails  
Not in his weakness, but because the light  
Is turned from in a selfish pride  
Had better died  
Before, with calloused soul, he learns

To hold that he is justified  
When he has failed to glimpse the Love,  
All else above,  
For which the whole of Nature aching ever yearns.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so, in truth, with eyes I thought uplifted,  
My steps were leading to a dark and ice-cold Hell.  
I had believed I marched and conquered. I had  
merely drifted.

Then God compassioned with me; and I met,  
And meeting loved—Estelle!

## K 1. AND K 2.

The fourth highest mountain peak in the world has been named by cartographers "K. 2."

CHALLENGING the giant Everest  
For world supremacy, it soars  
Lifting its snow clad crest  
Near thirty thousand feet into the azure  
of an Eastern sky,  
Stands sentinel above the rugged tableland of far  
Thibet,  
Whilst from its molten sides it pours  
Great streams of water into the teeming plains  
Where myriad voices ever raise the ceaseless cry  
"Assuage our thirst, enrich our fields, so we forget  
The pangs of hunger and the pains  
Of drought." Through the long years  
This mighty monarch of the Himalayan range  
Skyward rears  
The glittering lancepoint of its ice bound peak.  
Its snow draped sides untrod,  
Nor chance, nor change  
Affect its solemn, silent intercourse with God.  
Remote, mist-shrouded, Science had, perforce,  
to seek  
Amidst the tumbled mass of chasm and cliff,  
ravine and towering mountain top  
Its jealous guarded secret. Located after many years,  
Measured and charted, there appears  
The stately record of this vast outcrop  
Of rock primaeval. No grandiloquence  
Of nomenclature marks its consequence.

K. 2 is all the name  
By which it stands identified  
This far off mountain, which so long defied  
The curious interest of men. Its fame  
E'en now denied.

\* \* \* \* \*

July the twenty-second. Here I sit  
Thinking of just a little bit  
Of femininity. A woman child  
By whose kind eyes beguiled  
The rusting decades slip away,  
And Youth sings sweetly "Life is work *and* play."  
Vision slips backwards, inwards; and I muse—  
If between dominating forces one could choose  
That which should lead and guide  
Would one abide  
By all that mountain seems to typify—  
(Quest, domination, struggle; add and multiply)—  
In the harsh battle of ambitious aims  
Which made one long to climb and conquer?

What's the use  
Of scaling heights if, left behind,  
In the cold effort to improve one's mind  
The tender claims  
Of laughing lips  
Of little, rosy, clinging finger tips  
Are passed and there remains,  
For all one's pains,  
A husk without a core, a sapless rind?

This other K  
Holds a more potent sceptre, has a wider sway.  
And so I lay  
These verses at her feet  
On this her natal day.  
K. 2, Go too!  
I have no wreath for you.  
This is K. 1. Smile with those bright eyes, Sweet!  
Will you not kiss me, K?

To Kathleen (Kay)  
On her sixteenth birthday.



## INTERCESSIONAL



TO BESSIE McJ. BARRET

A LADY FROM 'OLE KAINTUCK', IN WHOM THE  
WRITER HAS BEEN PRIVILEGED TO DISCERN  
THOSE CHIVALROUS QUALITIES WITH WHICH  
HE HAS ENDOWED MOSES HIGGINS,  
THESE VERSES ARE INSCRIBED

F. P. Y



## INTERCESSIONAL

**I**N the little room, above the barn, in ole  
Kaintuck  
One Moses Higgins breathed his last. He'd  
"followed 'osses  
Most 'is life." These new machines had made things  
hard,  
But that stout heart had never lost its pluck.  
If old Mo' played a card  
And lost, you'd never hear a whine about his losses.  
I'd have you know that this old Mo',  
Above whose lonely grave wild grasses blow,  
Deserved as much that greatest epitaph,  
"A gentil, parfait knight,"  
As any doughty, mediaeval champion of the fight.  
His sword a reaping hook,  
His spear a staff,  
Nature his Book,  
He played the game, ploughed a straight furrow,  
never lied,  
Lived cleanly, loved devoutly, laid him down—and  
died.

The blue eyes glazed, and Moses Higgins looked  
upon a screen.  
"The Moses Higgins record!" called a voice.  
A shining figure—Mo' saw him fold his wings—  
Announced the choice.  
I guess it's me they mean,  
Thought Moses. "That's the Arch-Director,  
Gabriel. 'Hello, Gabe'," he said.


“You’ve got me goin’ round in rings.”  
“Hold on!” said Gabriel. “We’ve got to size you  
up a bit  
To see if you pass fit.  
You know you’re dead.”  
“I guess,” said Moses, “they’re aint much to show.  
Jus’ me behind the ’osses. It’s a pretty team.  
The grey mare’s savin’ her off fore.  
There’s Lizzie at the gate. She oughter know  
That I’m out lookin’ for her. It do seem  
As if she recklected I was kinder sore  
The time she beat it off to town  
With that young drummer chap who called me  
clown.  
But, bless yer, Liz, I’ve gotten over that this long  
ago.  
You creep in here, and lie all cuddled like yer  
useter—so.”

“What’s this yer showin’, Gabe? Why that aint  
me!  
I guess that’s Romeyo, or that Hamlick guy,  
Who stuck that fat chap, hid behind the curtain,  
with his sword.  
Gosh! How that made me larf! I’m blessed if I  
can’t see  
Doug Fairbanks doin’ stunts—and that blue eye  
I’d know a mile off—Mary Pick—My word!  
You don’t say that them is me and Liz  
Cuttin’ around, and doin’ all that funny biz!”

“Why, yes, I’ll say that when those actor chaps  
Was showin’ how you’d gotta play the game,  
And keep yer pecker up, and peg away, and tell  
the truth  
And trust yer girl,  
I useter feel  
That I’d no cause to squeal  
Because I didn’t seem to make no headway. I  
thought p’raps  
It weren’t no shame,  
Me bein’ what that drummer called uncouth  
(Yokel was right enough, but when he named me  
churl  
That riz me, and I knocked his silly tooth  
Into his windpipe)—I thought it weren’t no shame  
To make pretence that I was jus’ the same  
As them bright fellers. I useter step along  
(Me, ole Mo’—some Romeyo!)  
Behind the ’osses with a kind o’ song  
Singin’ inside me. What’s that Gabe?  
You’ve passed me? Reckon you’re some babe.  
I go behind the curtain ’long o’ Liz?  
And take the grey mare too? I’ll say that is  
Worth waitin’ for. I’ll tell ole Pete  
That he must keep them actor chaps a seat,  
For sure they helped a lot, and kep things clean  
and sweet,  
When life was kind o’ dull and work a grind  
In that ole Kaintuck shanty that I’ve left behind.”

Written in connection with Actor's  
Benefit Fund Fete at Los Angeles

“A CUP OF COLD WATER”

 HE Haberdasher's Assistant saluted the  
clear dawn,  
Scratching the while with unclean  
finger nail  
A festering surface on his thigh,  
With a yellow fanged and offending yawn,  
A bleary eye, and a dismal sigh,  
Half snore, half wail.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Through the green avenue of trees,  
Along the shining beach,  
They gave their willing horses rein,  
And the look in his pleasant tired eyes was like that of  
a war worn Moor who sees  
In the desert a haven of rest, and a harvest of grain,  
At last within his reach.*

\* \* \* \* \*

The Haberdasher's Assistant coughed, lay still,  
Caressed a pimple on his chin,  
And slowly counted the coins he had pinched  
By sly manoeuverings with ledger and with till.  
Made play with rusty razor, essayed cold water,  
shivered thereat and flinched.  
And so with dragging steps set forth his  
daily bread to win.

\* \* \* \* \*



*The little wrinkles round his tired eyes  
    Creased into kindness and mirth.  
    Hillside and moor, flood, field and tropic suns.  
The silken salon, music, laughter, azure skies,  
    Tempest, harsh conflict, belching guns,  
    Had marred and made this man for such as  
        he was worth.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Through door ajar the Haberdasher's Assistant spied  
    A bowed and broken figure; (*Mary, pity  
        women!*) Youth astray,  
    Hunger and misery enthroned where Love should  
        reign!  
And floundering in the squalid mire of his life, he  
    lied,  
    Denied himself, regretted, cursed, denied himself  
        again,  
    Found strength, gave comfort, shewed a  
        better way.

\* \* \* \* \*

*A veritable Knight he seemed.  
    " No doubt he'd lived his life."  
    (Those little bowed and broken figures by the way!)*  
*The road stretched fair in front. They talked and  
        dreamed.  
    (Thus is the balance. Some spend and others pay.)  
    Peace after battle. After Experience a wife.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*The sun, slow westering, lit the hills across the bay,  
Made glorious the glittering tracery of the trees,  
And cast a halo round her golden hair.*  
Aslant, down murky streets the dying day  
Groped for an entry up a narrow stair,  
But, fading, failed to find a form on bended  
knees.

\* \* \* \* \*


Is this the balance? In the cosmic veins  
A red corpuscle found a tardy birth.  
And aeons after with a surge as of rising tide, and  
of pent up flood,  
The vivifying Force which rules by yielding, and  
by service reigns,  
Multiplied and martialled the red corpuscles,  
attacked and routed, swept and cleansed the blood.

And thus did the Haberdasher's Assistant play a  
part in creating a new Heaven long after  
his rickety and calcareous bones had re-  
turned to the good Earth.

“NOBLESSE OBLIGE”



## "NOBLESSE OBLIGE"

HE sceptre passes. In the "good old days"  
When Gurth the swineherd waited at the postern  
gate  
And hugged the chains which bound him,  
munched the proffered crust,  
Nor questioned Fate,  
A single golden phrase—  
"Noblesse Oblige"—born in the cut and thrust  
Of those fierce conflicts which ennobled and enslaved  
Men with an equal birthright, helped to compensate  
For all the hideous inequity which ruled—and rules  
—the world.  
"*Dieu et mon droit*" the buccaneering Baron raved,  
With pennons flying, banner of silk unfurled,  
And robbed, and raped, and murdered with his  
chosen partner—God.  
Some fed their appetites. Others hewed the wood  
And drew the water, tilled the kindly soil,  
Broken in spirit kissed the chastising rod,  
Nor understood  
That the keen blade and pointed lance  
Were edged and sharpened by their honest toil.  
The gallant bearing and the gay romance  
Of those who reaped what these poor hinds had sown  
Obscured the issue, and the circumstance  
Of puling infants, cradled in mangers or in palaces,  
Determined who should perish in the fetid hovel,  
who should occupy the gilded throne.  
Thus human fallacies  
Forged chains which link by link  
Priests tempered, monarchs strengthened, lackeys  
and peasants embraced.

But one thought graced  
Those darkened ages. One lone star shone clear  
And helped the tossed and weather beaten craft to  
steer  
—Though blindly—to a haven where men should  
rest awhile.  
“Noblesse Oblige!” The Golden Rule applied  
To those who held the rank and wealth men almost  
deified.  
“Noblesse Oblige!” Surrender; sacrifice;  
Excuse for ignorance;  
The courteous smile  
When weakness hurled the angry insult; tolerance  
Of human frailties; pity for poverty. In this device  
Emblazoned on the banners of the chosen few  
A world distraught with hates and fears  
Found hope, held faith, gained solace for bitter tears,  
Courage in sorrow, measure of comfort, some  
small ruth for rue.

\* \* \* \* \*

The sceptre passes. Rank lingers on the stage  
Superfluous. “Captains and Kings depart.”  
Science, not privilege, marks the accepted sage.  
The brains of men, their industry, their art  
Fashion the crowns worth wearing. Fearless eyes  
Look into eyes as fearless. Throughout a continent  
Stretching three thousand miles from sea to sea  
No man so daft  
As to deny his heritage  
Of all the earth. Not one who deifies  
Those ancient fetishes which have meant

So much to men who had not known the joy of  
being free.

The crown of freedom presses on the brow

Of every citizen of America,

And here in the fair state of California

Where even now,

When half the world is hungered and athirst,

The horn is filled with plenty, and the presses burst

With all the lavish products of a golden soil,

That crown is studded with a thousand costly gems.

Enthroned and sceptred by their enterprise and toil

Winged are their feet to lead men forward.

Myrrh and frankincense

Are proffered by proud sovereigns of distant realms,

Piteous, entreating hands would touch the hems

Of garments worn by those whose eyes have seen  
the light

Denied to them; of men who can dispense

Their favours regally; whose hands are on the helms

Of all the little barques which set their timid sails

To catch the winds of Freedom; of men who've  
fought and won—in part—the fight.

\* \* \* \* \*

But what of all that Privilege entails?

"Noblesse Oblige." How far does that sweet phrase

Govern men's conduct in these later days

Of clash and clangour and of storm and stress?

These modern monarchs go their several ways

And ask, no favours, plead for no largesse.

They've learned to take what's theirs, to hold  
their own.

But what of giving? On the bare Caucasian slopes,  
Where the blue Danube rolls, on barren Russian  
plains,

On Don, on Dneiper, Vistula; on Rhine and Rhone,  
Amidst the tumbled Balkans—everywhere the hopes  
Of famished men, of lonely women, helpless  
orphans, rest upon the generosity of those  
whose gains

Have not been wasted in the cruel furnace of the war.  
And not in vain the quest!

America has proved herself as great in giving as in  
garnering wealth.

But money does not heal the scar  
Which sears the soul of men. What of the kindly  
thought,

The knightly courtesy, humility in pride—  
Gifts of the spirit which can not be bought?

There is no health

In arrogance, or in the strength which boasts,  
And would deride

The claims of those who cannot martial hosts  
To force them. “Noblesse Oblige.” From that  
old world

In which men groped towards the light,  
And, groping, bound themselves with iron chains  
Of Privilege, and Prejudice, and Fantasies, and  
Forms,

Has passed the sceptre. No longer, scented, curled,  
Pampered, misled by intrigue, flattered by parasite,  
Does Royalty dictate the issue. Thews and brains  
Bred in the crowded cities, nurtured in the fertile  
plains

Of free America can alone decide



Whether that civilization shall abide  
Which trembles in the balance. It is your pride  
That 'neath the stars and stripes, no crest, no  
coat of arms, no old device  
Of mud-stained chivalry  
Can link your purpose with a tortured past.  
The stripes for union, and the stars for liberty!  
Let that suffice!  
That "he alone must travel who would travel fast"  
Voices that other thought your stripes deny.  
The stripes for union! Would you then confine  
That sense of union? Give the lie  
To half your emblem? Do the stars reflect  
God's light upon a single continent  
Of this small globe, which, swinging in the firma-  
ment,  
Carries the destiny of man.  
Do you reject  
The wider plan,  
Which tells you that the call,  
Resounding on your platforms, echoed in your press,  
applauded even in your Council Hall,  
"First comes America," can never satisfy  
The souls of those who wield the sceptre? Is it not  
better than that golden phrase  
Which helped the weaker, made more strong the  
stronger, in those "good old—bad old—days"  
—"Noblesse Oblige"—be written on the flag which  
leads the van?  
So shall America not permit to die  
Her own ideal—The Real Brotherhood of Man.

## CREEDS, CONSTELLATIONS, AND CREEPING THINGS

THE sense of Oneness! If that only were  
achieved,  
And human brains conceived  
That greater thought which links  
Mankind, the sap which thrills with life  
The larkspur, poisonous red berry, and the little  
peeping frond,  
Born with a tender breath of spring into a world  
of strife,  
The fleeting moment and the Great Beyond,  
The furtive weasel as it homeward slinks  
Obscene with cruel bloodstains and yet sanctified  
In that she lives, as she had gladly died,  
To feed two cheeping, chattering little balls of fur,  
Pressing with soft, pink, clawless pads her swollen  
teats,  
Which constitute the Universe to her!  
Rapine, surrender, sacrifice, low greed, and lofty feats  
Of knightly chivalry, all inextricably bound and tied  
Into the very fabric of the lives  
Of men and mice and metals, hunter and hunted,  
prelates and butchers, doves, cormorants,  
cretaceans, prostitutes, and wives!  
If man but understood!  
The plains of France bear witness. Seamed and  
scarred  
The barren fields are sown with skulls and bones  
To ripen into hate twixt humans yet unborn:  
The erstwhile fruitful orchard and the peaceful wood  
All charred:

Sweet homesteads ravished, women dishonoured,  
little ones forlorn.

Is there no gain to balance? Nothing which atones?  
“A greater love no man can have than this.”

Through the long ages how those words resound!  
Stirred by a wave of generous, patriotic thought,  
(Come death! Come sickness, or the crippling  
wound!)

They held themselves as naught,  
Embraced the steel, welcomed the shattering roar  
of cannon, and the bullet's hiss,  
If England lived—If France escaped her doom—  
If the lost provinces of Italy could be redeemed—  
If young America could show the world  
That the free banner which she had unfurled  
Could not be stained by lust of conquest. Ebb  
and flow

Mark all the processes of Nature. Dying embers  
nurse the glow

From which again shall leap the sacred flame.

It has even seemed

That the filth-crust'd, dust-encumbered room  
Of human habitation

Has been garnished, cleansed and swept,  
Whilst strong men writhed in agony and women wept,  
For the greater delectation

Of seven times seven devils who have entered in.

Revise your phrases! Recognize that sin

Is clear insanity:

That egotistic faith to which you pin

Your hopes of gaining something which you've  
missed

A sheer inanity!  
"Sic vos non vobis." When the stern crusader kissed  
The cross which made a handle to the blade  
He fain would crimson with the blood of men  
Born in a distant land,  
He failed to understand  
That he blasphemed his own ideal.  
The tide creeps higher, despite the frequent retro-  
cession,  
Now as then.  
For not less real  
Has been the blundering ineptitude which has led  
Teuton and Gaul, Celt, Slav, and many a mingled  
breed  
Welded in selfless loyalty to a mere geographical  
expression  
To suffer jubilantly without heed  
To personal advantage. Yet the red blood they shed  
On Moloch's altar is accepted as a sacrifice  
In that it marks a dawning sense  
Of the extension of the sphere of influence  
Of that great Concept which shall one day kill  
The creeds which help to float the swimmer and  
then with strangling hold  
Engulf him in a sea of self. To heal the essential ill  
It shall not suffice  
That Mongol and Aryan would as lief  
Hamper or hurt each other as a thief  
Would steal the wage that he himself has earned.  
Far more bold  
Must be man's grasp of that Infinity,  
So faint discerned—

The infinitely small and infinitely great,  
The mite, the microbe, men, Martians, and the  
    Milky Way,  
Larva of dead volcanoes, laughing children, wondrous  
    webs of spiders, stinging nettles, fragrant  
    flowers in May,  
Love-linked, though seemingly distraught with hate,  
Inseparate, Inviolate—  
The One in All, and All in one, which is Divinity!



A MÉNAGE À TROIS ACROSS THE STYX





## A MÉNAGE À TROIS ACROSS THE STYX

“**I**T’S a dashed nuisance that we’ve lost our grips.  
That weird old fellow at the helm’s to blame.

I’m blowed  
If I’ll bestow upon these grinning boatmen any tips.  
I like this place. We’ll breakfast here. The air  
was chill

Crossing that river. Strange I cannot recollect  
the name.

I wish I’d rowed  
To keep me warm.

Why do you kiddies sit so glum and still?  
What does it matter where we’ve landed? It’s  
the same

So long as we’re together. Sweetheart, lend your  
lips!

Encircle me with your soft arm!  
That’s better. Feel myself again.

And now to breakfast. I vote we go and sit  
In the vine-trellised harbour yonder. P’raps  
we’ll get a drink.

It doesn’t look as if this place  
Was ruled by that damned prohibition. Shine or  
rain

We’ve stuck together since Claire made a hit  
With me, and I began to think  
In terms of real soul freedom, and this little  
Grace,

Wife of my springtime, recognized the truth  
That man is polygamic—kept her hand in mine—

Never reproached because we found that on a  
certain plane  
We met no longer; whether it was Youth  
That sprouted fresh within me—or the brute.  
I'm not abusing any part of God's creation.  
They are just as fine  
As we are—these frank, healthy, sane,  
Erotic, questing, hunting, fighting, lusting beasts.  
Well, anyway, Grace understood and played the  
game,  
And here we are—the three of us! Doesn't  
she look cute  
In that frilled nighty? Give me your lips, Claire!  
It's blamed queer  
That after all our feasts  
Of Love and Reason, when we talked, and danced,  
and sang,  
Touched life at every point,  
And never gave a hang  
For damned conventions, we should be sitting here  
In this rum joint,  
And dressed like this, as if we three had had a call  
At midnight which we could not shirk or stay.

\* \* \* \* \*

“So that's it, is it? You two knew that Life  
Held us no longer—that the Moving Picture Play  
Is over for the three of us? Well, after all  
It had to come some day.  
Styx or Spoon River! Loose me for a moment,  
Claire.  
I want that little Grace,  
My wife,

Back in my arms. Guess we've got to face  
This thing together. You, too, Claire! I  
    didn't mean  
To hurt you, sweetheart. You and I  
Have got to try  
To straighten this thing out—be fair and square  
To this dear child on whose calm strength  
    we've learned to lean.  
How did we die?

\*           \*           \*           \*           \*

"I remember now, Claire. You had sung  
And thrilled me with the passion of your  
    splendid voice.  
It seemed that liquid fire coursed my veins. I  
    had no choice.  
A star, low hung,  
Lit that sweet path which led  
To rapture. Grace had slipped away,  
To sleep or pray.  
You had shed  
Upon me all the generous, poignant beauty of  
    your love,  
Showered upon me all the glorious wealth  
Of that wild, wayward heart, which made your eyes  
Rubies for me, your breasts great chalices of wine,  
Gave to your voice the soft caressing murmur of  
    of the mating dove,  
And made your hair a mesh which held me by a  
    thousand strands of gold.  
And then with stealth  
Came footsteps to surprise,  
Came Greed and Violence to snatch poor gauds  
    of mine.

And when I started to resist I felt the clinging  
     hold  
 Of your soft arms. One shot in panic killed us both.  
 Terror had made that poor, stealing coward bold.  
 And Grace here—she could not have been far  
     off, Claire—  
 Nothing loth. . . . .  
*(Not far off! By God! That makes one think.*  
*Oh, yes! She'd acquiesced. But was it fair?)*  
 Took that to drink  
 Which brought her little body to the brink  
 Of the dark river which we've crossed.  
 So it's all over! All is won or lost.  
 We three have got to face the music—count  
     the cost!  
 The harvest ripens. Well, t'was I that sowed  
     the seed!  
 Hi! Waiter! Where's that queer old Ganymede?"

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

"Gen'man with two ladies, Sir! Wants to pay the  
     bill.  
 Seems that 'e's 'ad 'is fill  
 And doesn't know the rules of this establishment.  
 'Can't pay for wot I've 'ad?' 'e says.  
 ' 'Oo runs this show? Is this a bloomin' maze?  
 I've 'eard,' 'e says, 'of 'umans being' sent  
 Along the broad and easy path plumb down to Hell,  
 Or up the straight and narrer—jus' two ways.  
 But this would craze  
 A bleedin' Archimandrite to be told'  
 (You'll pardon me, Sir, if I'm overbold.  
 I'm usin' jus' the langwidge w'ich 'e used)

'That wot a fella's bought 'as not bin sold,  
 And that the one 'oo pays  
 Is not the chap wot's fed the biggest appetite.  
 I'd rather be excused  
 From entering any of the many mansions in this  
     'ouse'  
 (His actual words, Sir, were that 'e'd be damned)  
 'If I can't settle this account.  
 I'll do wot's right.  
 I've never subterfuged, or lied, or shammed,  
 And I'll pay up, wotever the amount.'  
 In fact 'e claimed to be the one and only mouse  
 As ate the cheese.  
 Judg'n, 'owever, that Yer Honor's ruling in this  
     case  
 Seems to be likely to affect the 'uman race  
 Considerable, since they've chucked the good old  
     wheeze  
 'Bout marriage bein' made in 'Eaven,  
 I've brought the crowd along.  
 I guess the little 'un supplies the leaven  
 To sweeten the 'ole lump,  
 Altho' she aint carollin' no sweet song.  
 There's suthin' about 'er seems to brighten  
     this old dump.  
 Well! That's your job, Sir. 'Scuse me now!  
     So long!"

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

"I see you misconstrue the purpose of this Court.  
 I'll not enter now  
 Into those super-subtleties to which your minds  
     are not attuned.

This is no anteroom to a kind of psychic health  
resort,  
Such as your quacks who flourish down below  
Construct to fit their predilections. You have  
mooned  
About your souls, and sought to justify  
A living lie  
By reference to Truths you've really failed to  
grasp,  
Altho' you've glimpsed them. Now you three  
Before me, in brief respite, stand at the last gasp  
Of those detached, encircling, envelopes of flesh  
(*Drops, rivulets, then rivers, then the open sea!*)  
Which for a space have circumscribed  
Those fragments of the essential, Universal stuff  
Short loaned to you. Each held within, and peering  
through, a mesh  
Has given to each, and has from each imbibed,  
And yet in futile, human arrogance has maintained  
The personal, egoistic standpoint. You believe  
That it is not enough  
That the whole Universe of circling orbs  
Should swing in ordered, rhythmic unison; that each  
scrap  
Of interlocking, interchanging, interacting dust,  
Each particle a Cosmos which has waxed and waned,  
(*Grass, fibre, shuttle, warp and woof, and, lo!*  
*the Final Weave!*)  
Should form a part of that Infinity of Mind  
Which grasps, reflects, ordains, reacts, absorbs  
All processes—is Life, is Love, is Hope,  
the very Sap  
And Substance—Hunger, Thirst, Soft Pity, Rabid  
Lust

Sex, Music, Dissolution, Reconstruction, Sun and  
Wind,

Heat, Vapour, Waves, Vibrations, Impulse, Act,  
Art, Mechanism, Ether, Poetry, Concept, Fact,  
Ape, Vegetable, Man, Sloth, Flea, and Cataract.

All this is not enough, but you must hold  
Since we've endowed a certain fragment of our whole  
With cerebration—matter in motion whirled around  
So that the things you call volition, thought,  
Follow on certain groupings—your mentalities  
enfold

A separate entity; that the human Soul  
Amounts to something which, as though in honour  
bound,

We must perpetuate. It matters naught  
That all the rotting refuse of the endless forms  
In which you see life spring and life decay  
Gainsay

Your theories. You cling  
To that which is in truth a very little thing.  
The lesson of the bees, of gin, depression,  
exaltation, calms and storms,

Of ions, coral, crawfish, Mamelukes and Kings,  
Seed, sceptres, sickness, health, volcanoes,  
wedding rings.

Laws, revolutions, motherhood, receding tides,  
dead stars,

Unions of labour, churches, comradeship, fierce  
wars—

All these escape you, since you magnify  
That little spark which animates  
The brief association of dead leaf, dead fly,  
Mist of the mountain, and the ocean slime,



*(Which, conscious of itself,  
Desires and copulates, breeds, barterers, boasts, and  
hates)*

Into a rounded whole. But neither Space  
nor Time  
Limit the vision of that conscious Universe  
In which you claim  
That each fortuitous concatenation of our element,  
Which is to Nature as the sound of insects'  
hum or as the scent

Of flowers, shall rest forever on its little shelf  
*(Marcus Aurelius, Robert Browning, Caliban,  
Wong Sin, Yourself)*

Beatified, or blighted by some cruel, vengeful,  
undiscerning curse.

You miss our aim.

Soft dalliance with houris, blissful adoration,  
human intercourse

With the few atoms you've contacted with before,  
Thrills without satiety,

A chain of transmigration with each link,  
Detached in individual knowledge from the one  
behind—

A weird variety

Of futile aspirations centred round the core  
Of finite consciousness which you choose to think  
To be the very Source

Of Something sempiternal. You must clear the mind  
Of all such aberrations. Hate, Love, Fear, Remorse  
Abide. No sparrow falls and leaves the Universe  
unchanged.

Your acts have helped or hurt  
To all time.



I have ranged  
 Beyond your comprehension. Hold to this.  
 Clean dirt,  
 (*The sweat of agonized, effete endeavour*  
*Or fierce, forbidden, lusting, generous, sympathetic*  
*kiss*),  
 Noisome slime,  
 (*Deliberate and hypocritical denial of the truth*)  
 May clog and jam our mechanism, both alike.  
 The one is swept away,  
 Dust dancing in the sun's clear ray.  
 The other, in that it retards th' appointed end,  
 Endures forever,  
 Confounds confusion, wrecks a myriad lives,  
 Is cancerous in the heart of that which men call God.  
 There is no ruth  
 For meanness, self deception, Pharisaic lies.  
 The man who strives  
 And fails, has helped to clear the issue. Made  
 The anti-toxin. The green sod  
 Which lightly rests where he was laid  
 Can deal with all that emanates. The little cries  
 Of peewits marks the passing of that soul,  
 Merged in the Infinite; enwrapt; oblivious; fragment  
 of the Conscious Whole.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I see friend Richard yawns portentously. Perhaps  
 he thinks  
 That all the troubles which afflict the tortured world  
 —It always has been tortured; ever on the brinks  
 Of endless crises—these are due

To the loquacity he has observed in Me,  
Indicative of that dread thing, senile decay.  
Instead of those harsh thunderbolts we hurled  
To drive our blithering sheep back into the fold,  
A stream of endless talk! Dick, I think that you  
Are justified. I said I would not deal in super-  
subtleties.

But I see  
I've got you all balled up when I have only told  
The half of half of the tenth part of all that I  
might say.

So to get back to earth! It has dawned on you  
That if my teaching holds, it matters naught  
To that dead self of yours if you have wrought  
Evil or good. Rewards, damnation, rapture, rue,  
All meaningless! A truce to metaphysics! I will  
merely hint

At that which some day will be understood  
Even by humans. What if you are sick?  
You long for health. Thought conquers. You  
are well.

Mind is the mint.

Your little cosmos—revolving atoms; Sleep and  
Awaking;

Procreation; Brain Work; Food;  
Co-operation; Energy; Despair; Hope; Habit;  
Flame and Wick—

Restores proportions, reckons values, skirts the  
brink of Hell,  
Emerges sane, and dances gladly down the path  
of Time.

But when mind fails? Does not this mean  
That all the myriad component parts lack unison,  
have not the sense of rhyme,

Fail to react, to comprehend direction, are self-  
 willed?  
 Now grant this comprehension! Does the new-born  
 child  
 Yearn to destroy the gentle breasts which wean?  
 Does the lute strive to make a rasping discord?  
 Yet it happens so,  
 For lack of comprehension—*which is Conscience*.  
 Dick!  
 Those fabled tortures, burnings, keeping dead  
 things quick  
 That they may suffer anguish, are as melting snow  
 To lips all cracked and parched, compared with  
 that distress  
 Which shatters, rends, and tears each fibre of the  
 Inner Consciousness  
 Of those who *know*,  
 Who've hurt, who've hindered, made insane, un-  
 clean,  
 The very thing they are—the All-Pervading,  
 All-Embracing, Great Unseen.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

"It comes to this,  
 The lightest kiss,  
 The flicker of a half-born thought,  
 Repression, Inclination—all these count.  
 Each a microscopic fount  
 Flowing eternal. Crushed insects fertilize a tiny seed;  
 The desert blossoms. From that little weed  
 Follow the chain of consequence! A flower plucked;  
 A darting rattlesnake; Human ambitions shattered,  
 brought to naught;

Hearts broken; children wailing—a whole world  
awry.

\* \* \* \* \*

“And now, my friends, I’ve chucked  
This highfalutin’ talk. I’ll have a try  
To size the situation up with which we’ve got to deal.  
In language suited to those mortal brains  
Which shortly must be used again for making grass  
or glow worms.  
We’ve got to balance losses, count the gains,  
Now that you three are dead.  
In spite of all I’ve said  
We go through all the forms  
Of judgment. What is your appeal?  
I’ll do the pleading. There is nothing sacrosanct  
About an institution planned by men and ratified  
by priests,  
Who incidentally may be thanked  
For half the troubles Flesh is heir to. Marriage  
feasts  
Occasion frequent indigestion. We continually shift  
Our standards. Many a dead Turk,  
By honest work,  
Has helped to give your little world a lift,  
Whose amorous proclivities might have justified  
—If we did things that way—  
A course in higher mathematics for that cheerful  
myth  
The Recording Angel. Your point is Richard,  
that you haven’t lied  
To your most intimate associate in the game of life,  
Your wife.

All those intensely complex forces which must play  
Upon the question—heredity, environment,  
    attributes  
Of mind and body—you had better leave to me.  
I'll extract the pith.  
Men are brutes.  
Mists of the mountain top are part and parcel  
    of the sea.  
The sum and substance of it all is this.  
—Clasp; handshake; soft caress; sweet, clinging,  
    biting kiss—  
Who has been taking, who been giving, most?  
*Just when you are, just where you are, just who*  
    *you are,*  
You've got to play the game, in peace or war,  
To help and not to hinder. The kindly crutch today  
Will atrophy sound limbs unless it's thrown away  
When all the host  
Of tiny filaments of nerve and tissue tingle at the call  
Of health restored.  
*Just who you are, just where you are, just when,*  
The world of men  
Must gain or lose by you. The supremest test  
Is giving and taking. One loved, and one abhorred  
By the Great Purpose. That's the all in all!  
Let go the rest!

\* \* \* \* \*

“One of you is rotten. That means a doom  
I've only vaguely adumbrated. Grace's  
    pleading eyes  
Tell the old tale. Vicarious sacrifice  
Means nothing really. We have no room  
For purely human sentiment. And yet

You'll miss the balance, finer than the thread  
Of finest gossamer split in a billion strands,  
If you fail to get  
The inner meaning of the thing called Love.  
We put that above  
Aught else—The love which understands,  
Surrenders, suffers, and endures when passion's  
cold and dead.

And if this wins no solace, no respite  
For the one loved, what use has been the fight?  
Your question, Grace! It all depends, my child,  
On the reaction of the man you've loved—  
the thing you've made.

Depend upon it you've created something which  
will aid.

—A spark! A seedling!—Pass, my daughter,  
unafraid.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Claire, you are trembling. Rash, wayward, wild,  
You've grasped as well as given,  
Perchance, not striven  
Too hard to conquer appetite.

Dust dancing in the sunbeam, Claire!  
You recollect my simile. Well, well! Our air  
Cannot be all pure ether. You're all right!

\* \* \* \* \*

"Oh, Yes! We know the women ministered for  
their own delight,

Each in her separate way.

There's much to say

On your side, Richard. It's a fearful coil

This old sex problem. Brain and brain;

Body and body; that flashing keen insight

Into a world of art and beauty which is all the soul  
You humans are endowed with. Wit, laughter,  
    share of toil—  
How these unite!  
Give sense of rounded whole!  
Pulses beat higher, comradeship ensues,  
A splendid gain,  
But clean outside that marriage contract. I will use  
A simple illustration—then have done.  
If something has been lost it often happens  
    something has been won.

\*           \*           \*           \*           \*           \*

“Here is a type. Rigid, affectionate, honest, clean,  
    upright,  
He passes to the home where that embrace  
Which Law has sanctified,  
Shall still the throb of Nature on this day of spring.  
A familiar face,  
Lips which have never lied,  
Quiescent, acquiescent, dutiful—the wife.  
And then the sting—  
We’ll skip the details; how it came about;  
The chance acquaintance; skirt uplifted, eyes that  
    brimmed,  
Then flushed with the soft dew of passion—  
    Aye the sting,  
The bruise—dear bruise—the hurt—sweet hurt—  
    the bite  
Of vivid, vital, pulsing, energizing Life,  
By poets hymned.  
There’s something lost. Inevitable deceit,  
A hidden background. (*That has been left out  
In your case, Richard.*) If in that retreat



From rectitude and boredom there has sprung  
Real tenderness, real pity, longing for solace,  
that heartache  
Which makes men generous, something has been  
gained.  
Forces which mar are forces which can make.  
Fire can cleanse that which the smoke of fire has  
stained.  
All must be reckoned. When the urge was spent,  
The soft arms flung  
Beneath those flowing tresses, wrapt in sleep  
She lay. The glimmer of a tear  
Upon her cheek. Men prey and women weep!  
Into her shell like ear  
He murmured 'Oh! My dear! My dear!  
The pity of it!' *We count that.*

\* \* \* \* \*

"Have we arrived now, Richard? Do you sense  
The final judgment?—What I am driving at?  
We leave it in the very last event  
—You'll suffer, Richard!—to your Conscience."









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